

Hosea

Chapter 9

Punishment for Israel

Do not rejoice, O Israel; do not be jubilant like the other nations. For you have been unfaithful to your God; you love the wages of a prostitute at every threshing floor. ² Threshing floors and winepresses will not feed the people; the new wine will fail them. ³ They will not remain in the LORD's land; Ephraim will return to Egypt and eat unclean food in Assyria. ⁴ They will not pour out wine offerings to the LORD, nor will their sacrifices please him. Such sacrifices will be to them like the bread of mourners; all who eat them will be unclean. This food will be for themselves; it will not come into the temple of the LORD. ⁵ What will you do on the day of your appointed feasts, on the festival days of the LORD? ⁶ Even if they escape from destruction, Egypt will gather them, and Memphis will bury them. Their treasures of silver will be taken over by briars, and thorns will overrun their tents. ⁷ The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac. ⁸ The prophet, along with my God, is the watchman over Ephraim, yet snares await him on all his paths, and hostility in the house of his God. ⁹ They have sunk deep into corruption, as in the days of Gibeah. God will remember their wickedness and punish them for their sins. ¹⁰ "When I found Israel, it was like finding grapes in the desert; when I saw your fathers, it was like seeing the early fruit on the fig tree. But when they came to Baal Peor, they consecrated themselves to that shameful idol and became as vile as the thing they loved. ¹¹ Ephraim's glory will fly away like a bird— no birth, no pregnancy, no conception. ¹² Even if they rear children, I will bereave them of every one. Woe to them when I turn away from them! ¹³ I have seen Ephraim, like Tyre, planted in a pleasant place. But Ephraim will bring out their children to the slayer." ¹⁴ Give them, O LORD— what will you give them? Give them wombs that miscarry and breasts that are dry. ¹⁵ "Because of all their Wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I will drive them out of my house. I will no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious. ¹⁶ Ephraim is blighted, their root is withered, they yield no fruit. Even if they bear children, I will slay their cherished offspring." ¹⁷ My God will reject them because they have not obeyed him; they will be wanderers among the nations.

9:1–9 Hosea speaks. (TLSB)

9:1 This verse begins a section that was probably spoken at a harvest festival, such as the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:33–43; Dt 16:13–15). (CSB)

DO NOT REJOICE – "unto exultation," like the heathen, with a joy which, after the fashion of the heathen, attributed a bountiful harvest to the idols. (Kretzmann)

Given the seriousness of the warnings, this was no time for making merry. (TLSB)

unfaithful. See 1:2; 2:2–5. (CSB)

wages of a prostitute. See 2:5, 12; not to be taken literally, but in the sense of spiritual adultery. (CSB)

Namely, the lover's reward which Israel expected from the idols for the homage shown them, which they hoped to get on the threshing-floor in the form of an abundant yield. (Kretzmann)

at every threshing floor. Since the threshing floor at threshing time was a man's world—the threshers stayed there all night to protect the grain and feasted at the end of the day's labors—prostitutes were not uncommon visitors (see Ru 3:2–3 and notes). (CSB)

The large, flat, open areas where grain was threshed were also used for religious ceremonies honoring Baal. Israel was expecting “wages” from Baal for its adulterous worship, i.e., its ritual prostitution. (TLSB)

9:2 WILL FAIL THEM – They would be sorely disappointed in their hopes of a rich harvest. (Kretzmann)

new wine shall fail them. Far from receiving bounty in return for its worship of pagan idols, Israel will find the vines so bare that the grapes produce hardly any wine. (TLSB)

9:3 LORD'S LAND. The promised land, which the Lord claimed as his own (cf. Lev 25:23; Jos 22:19; Jer 2:7; Eze 38:16; Joel 1:6). (CSB)

The same Lord who had given Israel the Promised Land was about to take back this blessing. (TLSB)

Ephraim. Israel, the northern kingdom. (CSB)

Egypt ... Assyria. Israel was threatened with exile to the lands it depended on—where the temple sacrifice could not be offered. (CSB)

unclean. A foreign country was unclean. What grew there was likewise unclean, because it was the product of fertility credited to pagan gods (see Eze 4:13). (CSB)

Ritually unclean, because the crops could not be grown in the Lord's land or be consecrated with the firstfruits offering (Dt 26:1–11).

9:4–5 Living as captives in a foreign country would totally disrupt the worship rituals prescribed by the Lord. (TLSB) *mourners' bread.. defiled.* Those who ate mourners' bread would themselves become unclean. *for their hunger only.* Defiled bread would still serve to relieve physical hunger. (TLSB)

9:4 *bread of mourners*. Unclean, like bread in a house where there had been a death (see Nu 19:14; Dt 26:14; Jer 16:7). All who touched it became ceremonially unclean. (CSB)

Bread touched by a mourner who had been in contact with a dead body was unclean (Nu 19:11–22). (TLSB)

not come into the temple of the LORD. In exile Israel would have no place (not even those places established by Jeroboam I; 1Ki 12:28–33) where she could bring sacrifices to the Lord or celebrate her religious festivals (v. 5). (CSB)

Defiled bread could not be brought into the Lord’s temple. (TLSB)

9:5 Since the Temple and its cult would be missing in the land of their exile, festal days with their solemn joy would not be possible. (Kretzmann)

Feast of Booths, an autumn harvest festival, was an esp joyful occasion. (TLSB)

9:6 *Egypt*. Some in Israel fled from destruction by going to Egypt (cf Jer 44:1). However, they found no lasting refuge there. (TLSB)

Memphis. The capital of Lower (northern) Egypt. (CSB)

Egyptian city famous for its pyramids and huge graveyard. Many expatriated Israelites were buried there. (TLSB)

briers, and thorns. Cf. a similar threat against Edom (Isa 34:13). (CSB)

Weeds with jagged leaves, covered with stinging hairs. (TLSB)

9:7 *recompense*. The punishment on Israel is payback for rejecting the Lord and rebelling against His Law. (TLSB)

inspired man. See Mic 2:11; 3:8. (CSB)

Reflects what many in Ephraim were saying about Hosea’s prophetic warnings. (TLSB)

maniac. See 2Ki 9:11; Jer 29:26; cf. 1Sa 21:15. (CSB)

Hosea responds to this charge of being a fool by asserting that he, a righteous man full of God’s Spirit, is at wit’s end because of the people’s sin and hatred. (TLSB)

Will almost be driven to insanity by the conditions. (Kretzmann)

9:8 *watchman*. See Isa 56:10; Jer 6:17; Eze 3:17; 33:2–8. (CSB)

"A seer (or searcher) is Ephraim with my God," beside the true God; that is, instead of relying upon the revelations received by Hosea, the children of Israel were on the lookout for other revelations, from sources more acceptable to them. (Kretzmann)

snares ... hostility. Israel showed only hostility toward the watchmen (the true prophets) whom God sent to warn his people of the great dangers that threatened (see Jer 1:19; 11:19; 15:10; Am 7:10–12). (CSB)

A fowler is one who hunts birds by setting traps. Hosea feels as though he is a hunted man in Ephraim. (TLSB)

hatred. The prophet, who by rights should have been loved for proclaiming the Lord's Word, is hated. (TLSB)

9:9 *corruption.* The word used of the Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Ex 32:7; Dt 9:12; 32:5). (CSB)

days of Gibeah. A reference to the corrupt events of Jdg 19–21. (CSB)

Refers to the appalling sexual crime committed years earlier by some residents of Gibeah. These Benjaminites, thwarted in their attempt to rape a visiting Levite, abused the man's concubine all night until she fell dead. As a consequence, all Israel attacked the tribe of Benjamin, killing 25,000 men (Jgs 19:1-20:48). (TLSB)

God will remember. Sins unrepented of are remembered, as well as the accumulated sins of generations (see 13:12). (CSB)

9:10–13 The Lord speaks. (TLSB)

9:10 The covenant relation is traced back to the desert (see 2:14–15; 13:5; Dt 32:10). (CSB)

WHEN I FOUND ISRAEL – At the time when Jehovah chose them as His people and led them forth from the land of bondage. (Kretzmann)

grapes ... fig. Refreshing delicacies (see Isa 28:4; Mic 7:1). The images used here (grapes in the desert, early fruit of the fig tree) beautifully convey God's delight in Israel when she, out of all the nations, committed herself to him in covenant at Sinai. (CSB)

The Lord likens Himself to a traveler in the wilderness who unexpectedly finds a vineyard. Such was His initial pleasure in the first Israelites. But that feeling changed as Israel became more and more apostate. (TLSB)

Baal Peor. A shortened form of Beth Baal Peor. Peor was a mountain (Dt 3:29). Baal Peor refers to the god of Peor (Nu 25:1–4) and was used interchangeably with

Beth Peor, “the temple of Peor” (see Dt 3:29; 4:3, 46; Jos 13:20). Hosea refers here to the incident in Nu 25. (CSB)

Mountain in Moab, c 12 mi NE of the northern end of the Salt Sea. (TLSB)

consecrated themselves to the thing of shame. Refers to the episode in which Israel joined with the Moabites in worshiping Baal (Nu 25:1–3). This worship may have included child sacrifice (cf Ps 106:37–38). (TLSB)

became ... vile. See Isa 5:2, 4, 7. (CSB)

Both in bodily and spiritual adultery. (Kretzmann)

thing they loved. A baneful consequence of idolatry is that the worshiper begins to resemble his or her idol. Cf Ps 115:8. (TLSB)

9:11 Ephraim’s glory. Her large population and prosperity. The punishment fit the sin. Prostitution produces no increase (see 4:10). (CSB)

The population being decreased even by the prevention of births, by the Lord's withholding His blessing of fruitfulness from them. (Kretzmann)

glory shall fly away. Israel enjoyed renown among the surrounding nations, but that glory was fleeting. (TLSB)

no birth, no pregnancy, no conception! One of the most devastating results of sin is its effect on children. The birthing process is traced backward to show how life will be turned upside down when war descends on Israel. (TLSB)

9:12 to them. To the children. (CSB)

9:13 Israel’s glory days have been compared to a productive vine, a fruitful fig tree (v 10), and a thriving palm (v 13). In those days, God’s faithful people did right and so produced much fruit, including children. But when the invading Assyrians strike, Ephraim’s children will be mercilessly slaughtered. (TLSB)

Tyre. Noted for its wealth, pleasant environment and security (see Eze 27:2–26). (CSB)

That is, the Lord had intended for it the growth, wealth, and power of the mighty Phoenician city. (Kretzmann)

9:14 Hosea did not pray out of hateful vengeance against Israel, but because he shared God’s holy wrath against her sins. (CSB)

Hosea asks the Lord what He will give His people. He then prays that the Lord will grant His people a lesser evil than seeing their children slaughtered—no children at all. (TLSB)

9:15 *Gilgal*. Across the Jordan River from Baal-peor; it was the site of Saul's inauguration as the first king. It long served as an illegitimate worship center, even after the temple was built in Jerusalem. Cf Am 4:4. (TLSB)

Which seems to have been one of the chief places of idolatrous worship, so that the wickedness of the nation was there concentrated. (Kretzmann)

hate them. Hbr verb involves rejection and distancing (cf v 17). (TLSB)

drive them out of my house. As the unfaithful wife was driven from the husband's house, so Israel was driven from God's "house"—i.e., his land (see 8:1 and note). (CSB)

The Lord threatens to divorce Himself from Ephraim on account of the people's incessant wickedness. (TLSB)

My house. The entire Promised Land. Cf 8:1. (TLSB)

leaders ... rebellious. A wordplay in Hebrew. (CSB)

The leading men of the nation, **are revolvers**, rebellious and faithless with regard to the Lord's covenant. (Kretzmann)

9:16 Cf Ex 34:7. The Lord permitted Assyria to conquer Israel, inevitably causing innocent children to be put to death for the sins of their parents. (TLSB)

9:17 *My God*. Hosea's words alone, for God was no longer Israel's God. (CSB)

reject. See 4:6; 2Ki 17:20. (CSB)

wanderers. Like Cain (Ge 4:14–15). (CSB)

God's people will be dispersed, first by the hands of the Assyrians and later the Babylonians. These exiles fulfilled the prophetic warning, spoken as early as Moses, that apostasy would cause the Lord to scatter His people. (TLSB)